

The Role of Knowledge in Social Action

Concepts and Principles of Social Action

Issues for Social Action with Youth

Bahá'í Social – Social Action4 - Knowledge

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Knowledge a Gift of God

Knowledge is one of the wondrous gifts of God. It is incumbent upon everyone to acquire it. Such arts and material means as are now manifest have been achieved by virtue of His knowledge and wisdom which have been revealed in Epistles and Tablets through His Most Exalted Pen—a Pen out of whose treasury pearls of wisdom and utterance and the arts and crafts of the world are brought to light.

(Bahá'u'lláh, Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, p. 39)

Everyone should acquire knowledge

Knowledge is as wings to man's life, and a ladder for his ascent. Its acquisition is incumbent upon everyone. The knowledge of such sciences, however, should be acquired as can profit the peoples of the earth, and not those which begin with words and end with words.... In truth, knowledge is a veritable treasure for man, and a source of glory, of bounty, of joy, of exaltation, of cheer and gladness unto him.

(Bahá'u'lláh, Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, pp. 51-52)

Useful Knowledge

The Great Being saith: The learned of the day must direct the people to acquire those branches of knowledge which are of use, that both the learned themselves and the generality of mankind may derive benefits therefrom. Such academic pursuits as begin and end in words alone have never been and will never be of any worth.

(Bahá'u'lláh, Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, p. 169)

Serve the welfare of humanity

In this day the choicest fruit of the tree of knowledge is that which serveth the welfare of humanity and safeguardeth its interests.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Tabernacle of Unity*, par. 1.16)

Fruit of the human tree

Strain every nerve to acquire both inner and outer perfections, for the fruit of the human tree hath ever been and will ever be perfections both within and without. It is not desirable that a man be left without knowledge or skills, for he is then but a barren tree. Then, so much as capacity and capability allow, ye needs must deck the tree of being with fruits such as knowledge, wisdom, spiritual perception and eloquent speech.

(Bahá'u'lláh, from a Tablet—translated from the Persian)

Knowledge and Love of God

... every branch of learning, conjoined with the love of God, is approved and worthy of praise; but bereft of His love, learning is barren—indeed, it bringeth on madness. Every kind of knowledge, every science, is as a tree: if the fruit of it be the love of God, then is it a blessed tree, but if not, that tree is but dried-up wood, and shall only feed the fire.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, par. 154.3)

Advanced Knowledge

Make every effort to acquire the advanced knowledge of the day, and strain every nerve to carry forward the divine civilization.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, from a Tablet—translated from the Persian)

Moral character before knowledge

Good behaviour and high moral character must come first, for unless the character be trained, acquiring knowledge will only prove injurious. Knowledge is praiseworthy when it is coupled with ethical conduct and virtuous character; otherwise it is a deadly poison, a frightful danger. A physician of evil character, and who betrayeth his trust, can bring on death, and become the source of numerous infirmities and diseases.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, from a Tablet—translated from the Persian)

Acquire current knowledge

The harder they strive to widen the scope of their knowledge, the better and more gratifying will be the result. Let the loved ones of God, whether young or old, whether male or female, each according to his capabilities, bestir themselves and spare no efforts to acquire the various current branches of knowledge, both spiritual and secular, and of the arts. Whensoever they gather in their meetings let their conversation be confined to learned subjects and to information on the knowledge of the day.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, from a Tablet—translated from the Arabic)

Promote knowledge for children

It is clear that learning is the greatest bestowal of God; that knowledge and the acquirement thereof is a blessing from Heaven. Thus is it incumbent upon the friends of God to exert such an effort and strive with such eagerness to promote divine knowledge, culture and the sciences, that ere long those who are schoolchildren today will become the most erudite of all the fraternity of the wise. This is a service rendered unto God Himself, and it is one of His inescapable commandments.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, from a Tablet—translated from the Persian)

Religion supports knowledge

... the religion of God is the promoter of truth, the establisher of science and learning, the supporter of knowledge, the civilizer of the human race, the discoverer of the secrets of existence, and the enlightener of the horizons of the world. How then could it oppose knowledge? God forbid! On the contrary, in the sight of God knowledge is the greatest human virtue and the noblest human perfection.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Some Answered Questions, pp. 154–155)

Religion supports knowledge

To oppose knowledge is pure ignorance, and he who abhors knowledge and learning is not a human being but a mindless animal. For knowledge is light, life, felicity, perfection, and beauty, and causes the soul to draw nigh to the divine threshold. It is the honour and glory of the human realm and the greatest of God's bounties. Knowledge is identical to guidance, and ignorance is the essence of error.

Happy are those who spend their days in the pursuit of knowledge, in the discovery of the secrets of the universe, and in the meticulous investigation of truth!

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, [Some Answered Questions](#), pp. 154–155)

Rational soul discovers knowledge

All the sciences, branches of learning, arts, inventions, institutions, undertakings, and discoveries have resulted from the comprehension of the rational soul. These were once impenetrable secrets, hidden mysteries, and unknown realities, and the rational soul gradually discovered them and brought them out of the invisible plane into the realm of the visible. This is the greatest power of comprehension in the world of nature, and the uttermost limit of its flight is to comprehend the realities, signs, and properties of contingent things.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, [Some Answered Questions](#), pp. 250–251)

Science is love of reality

Science is the first emanation from God toward man. All created beings embody the potentiality of material perfection, but the power of intellectual investigation and scientific acquisition is a higher virtue specialized to man alone. Other beings and organisms are deprived of this potentiality and attainment. God has created or deposited this love of reality in man. The development and progress of a nation is according to the measure and degree of that nation's scientific attainments. Through this means its greatness is continually increased, and day by day the welfare and prosperity of its people are assured.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, [The Promulgation of Universal Peace](#), p. 67)

Knowledge, volition and action

All the heavenly Books, divine Prophets, sages and philosophers agree that warfare is destructive to human development, and peace constructive. They agree that war and strife strike at the foundations of humanity. Therefore, a power is needed to prevent war and to proclaim and establish the oneness of humanity.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, [The Promulgation of Universal Peace](#), pp. 217–218)

Knowledge, volition and action

But knowledge of the need of this power is not sufficient. Realizing that wealth is desirable is not becoming wealthy. The admission that scientific attainment is praiseworthy does not confer scientific knowledge. Acknowledgment of the excellence of honor does not make a man honorable. Knowledge of human conditions and the needed remedy for them is not the cause of their betterment.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, [The Promulgation of Universal Peace](#), pp. 217–218)

Knowledge, volition and action

To admit that health is good does not constitute health. A skilled physician is needed to remedy existing human conditions. As a physician is required to have complete knowledge of pathology, diagnosis, therapeutics and treatment, so this World Physician must be wise, skillful and capable before health will result. His mere knowledge is not health; it must be applied and the remedy carried out.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, [The Promulgation of Universal Peace](#), pp. 217–218)

Knowledge, volition and action

The attainment of any object is conditioned upon knowledge, volition and action. Unless these three conditions are forthcoming, there is no execution or accomplishment.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, [The Promulgation of Universal Peace](#), pp. 217–218)

Science and Religion

Acceptance of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh carries with it the commitment to strive for individual spiritual maturity and to participate in collective efforts to build a thriving society and contribute to the common weal. Science and religion are the two inseparable, reciprocal systems of knowledge impelling the advancement of civilization.

(The Universal House of Justice, from a message dated 17 June 2011 to the Believers in the Cradle of the Faith)

Progress depends on knowledge

In the words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *“The progress of the world of humanity dependeth upon knowledge, and its decline is due to ignorance. When the human race gaineth in knowledge it becometh heavenly, and when it acquireth learning it taketh on lordly attributes.”*

Seek to acquire knowledge

To seek to acquire knowledge and learning and to study useful sciences and crafts are among the fundamental beliefs of the followers of Bahá'u'lláh. Therefore, the long-term solution you have chosen as a means of counteracting the difficulties imposed upon you in the path of higher education is to engage in constructive collaboration with other proponents of peace and reconciliation to build a progressive and orderly society committed to the promotion of knowledge and social justice.

(The Universal House of Justice, from a message dated 17 June 2011 to the Believers in the Cradle of the Faith)

Harmony of Science and Religion

One of the critical aspects of a conceptual framework that will require careful attention in the years ahead is the generation and application of knowledge.... At the heart of most disciplines of human knowledge is a degree of consensus about methodology—an understanding of methods and how to use them appropriately to systematically investigate reality to achieve reliable results and sound conclusions.

(Letter dated 24 July 2013 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly)

Harmony of Science and Religion

Bahá'ís who are involved in various disciplines—economics, education, history, social science, philosophy, and many others—are obviously conversant and fully engaged with the methods employed in their fields. It is they who have the responsibility to earnestly strive to reflect on the implications that the truths found in the Revelation may hold for their work. The principle of the harmony of science and religion, faithfully upheld, will ensure that religious belief does not succumb to superstition and that scientific findings are not appropriated by materialism.

[\(Letter dated 24 July 2013 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly\)](#)

Access to Knowledge

Fundamentally, a great share of the Bahá'í community's efforts has been directed at addressing the root cause of religious prejudice—ignorance. “The perpetuation of ignorance”, the House of Justice has stated, “is a most grievous form of oppression; it reinforces the many walls of prejudice that stand as barriers to the realization of the oneness of humankind.... Access to knowledge is the right of every human being, and participation in its generation, application and diffusion a responsibility that all must shoulder in the great enterprise of building a prosperous world civilization—each individual according to his or her talents and abilities.”

[\(Letter dated 27 December 2017 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer\)](#)

Access to Knowledge

This orientation has particularly manifested itself in the Bahá'í community's focus on education, which has been a central concern since the inception of the Faith; in its efforts to foster in individuals a growing consciousness and capacity to recognize prejudice and to counter it; in its practice of using consultative processes in all its affairs; and in its commitment to and upholding of the dual knowledge systems of science and religion as being necessary for the advancement of civilization.

(Letter dated 27 December 2017 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer)

Access to Knowledge

Moreover, the development of the life of the mind and independent investigation of reality, which are highly prized in the Bahá'í writings, serve to equip individuals to distinguish truth from falsehood, which is so essential if prejudices, superstitious beliefs, and outworn traditions that impede unity are to be eliminated. 'Abdu'l-Bahá offers the assurance in this respect that “once every soul inquireth into truth, society will be freed from the darkness of continually repeating the past.”

(Letter dated 27 December 2017 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer)

FUNDAEC

FUNDAEC is a Bahá'í-inspired organization, founded in 1974 in the Norte del Cauca region of Colombia, where a group of young professionals—scientists, educators, and agricultural engineers—came together with a vision of living and working alongside rural populations in their development. This work has touched the lives of more than 300,000 young people through the Sistema de Aprendizaje Tutorial (SAT, or Tutorial Learning System), as well as through initiatives such as the Preparation for Social Action (PSA) programme. <https://fundaec.org/>



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It has worked alongside rural communities to develop educational processes that integrate the material and spiritual dimensions of life. In particular, it has rethought education and learning to make it relevant to poor rural communities, rather than how to live in the cities. It sees all people as protagonists in the development of their community—seeds whose capacities can be nurtured to bear fruit for generations. The true impact is cumulative and deeply interwoven, where one programme reinforces another, creating a profound effect.



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Its deeper processes reflect the conviction among thousands of farmers, youth, teachers, mothers, and many others, that every human being possesses latent capacities that can be awakened and directed toward the common good. It demonstrates experiences, collective efforts, and the gradual construction of patterns of community life rooted in dignity and purpose. This educational approach inspired by principles such as the oneness of humanity, the inherent nobility of every person, and the harmony of science and religion has enabled communities to take charge of their own development.



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Development is not something brought from outside; it grows from within communities themselves. In rural regions where access to education was once limited, particularly for women and youth, FUNDAEC's programmes opened pathways that allowed individuals to remain rooted in their communities while gaining knowledge relevant to their lives. Individuals and communities gradually shape more hopeful possibilities for the generations to come.



FUNDAEC

FUNDAEC

FUNDAEC's work also fits within wider social realities. During periods of political violence and displacement in Colombia, educational spaces created through its programmes offered young people alternatives grounded in constructive action and cooperation. As the work expanded beyond Colombia, similar principles guided adaptation to diverse cultural and institutional contexts.

Bahá'í World News Service, *Weaving Paths*, video documentary for FUNDAEC's 50th anniversary, 18 December 2025

<https://news.bahai.org/story/1842/weaving-paths-film-reflects-fundaecs-vision-work-50-years>



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